# Body Scan Discussion

* “Don’t go to sleep” (Participant 1);
* “Don’t open your eyes or let your mind wander” (Participant 2);
* “Relax!” (Participant 3);
* “Don’t get out of time with the tape” (Participant 4).

Note how each, in his or her own way, moved rapidly from an observation about what was happening, to a negative and self-critical judgment.

P: My legs felt really heavy to start with, and then I couldn’t keep them still. I wanted to keep moving them all the time. I thought there must be something wrong because I couldn’t hear anybody else moving and I was desperate to move mine. And then I heard somebody beginning to snore gently, and I thought: Oh, my gosh. This is awful. Somebody has gone to sleep.

P: I was really worried about it, because they had gone to sleep. I thought: Please go to sleep.

I: This is great. I am really glad you are saying all this. This is wonderful. Because the whole point of this is that we become aware of whatever is. So that there isn’t a right or a wrong thing to happen. The aim of the exercise is, as best you can (and it is difficult), becoming aware of whatever you are feeling at the time. And for you - you fidgetiness and wanting to move-that’s great. It’s just your experience in that moment. It’s not wrong. It’s not what shouldn’t happen. That is the thing to become aware of. And eventually, you know, with that awareness, you may be able to become aware of the urge to move and make a decision, whether you are going to go with it or not.

P: I tried to suppress it. I wanted to sort of move around.

I: OK, well, there is no need to try and fight these things. This is hard, particularly for something as strong as an agitation. But, as best you can, just acknowledge it: “Right, OK, there you are. I really want to get up and jump around here, and I am fed up with this. It’s going too slowly.” Whatever. As best you can, acknowledge all of it. Because that is your experience in that moment, and that is what you really need to know. So you acknowledge it, you don’t push it away. Acknowledge it, and then, as best you can, bring your attention back to whatever bit of the body we are on.

My arms felt ever so itchy. I kept getting midges [flies] going round me. There was one on the table and twice it went on my arm, and I opened my eye and had a look. I didn’t think I was supposed to do that.

I kept thinking I am supposed to be relaxed here.

OK. So this thing that we are going to come across over and over again is this idea of “how things are meant to be” or “how things should be.” And it’s this tension that causes our distress. It is often something that was put in our minds as children. It may have been useful then, but it may not be useful now. And if we can become aware of this, then we can let go of it and just deal with what is. How do we do this? By becoming aware of the feeling that “I should be doing this right,” acknowledging it, and letting go of it. Then we are dealing with reality, with actuality in this moment, rather than all these images about what should be or ought to he, or what we ought to expect.

I find it hard to breathe out when told to. I keep getting it back to front. My breath was not in time with the instructions.

Just see if you can be gentle with yourself. See if you can cultivate this attitude, not “It’s wrong and naughty; I’m doing it back to front” but “Oh, that’s how it is.”

In each case, notice how the response of the instructor invites

people to acknowledge and become curious about the things that come up for them, to be gentle with themselves rather than blaming themselves for having failed. The task is like that of a cartographer making a map of relatively unexplored land. Whatever the cartographer finds, whether the view is of rolling hills or dangerous-looking precipices, the task is the same: to note as accurately as possible what is there. As best you can, acknowledge all of it. Because that is your experience in that moment, and that is what you really need to know.